

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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P R 261642Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
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AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
INFO AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
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S E C R E T THE HAGUE 0430

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJ: ITALIAN SITUATION

REF: STATE 015066

1. WE BELIEVE DUTCH GOVERNMENT, AND CERTAINLY FOREIGN MINISTRY
GENERALLY SHARES U.S. APPREHENSIONS AT PROSPECT OF PCI
SHARING POWER IN ITALY. AT LUNCHEON LAST WEEK DURING VISIT OF
EUR/NE DIRECTOR FUNSETH MFA POLITICAL DIRECTOR RUTTEN
COMMENTED POSITIVELY ON U.S. STATEMENT AND MADE CLEAR
DUTCH WERE ALSO VERY MUCH CONCERNED ABOUT PRESENT ITALIAN
SITUATION. AT SAME TIME, WE HAVE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT GON
WOULD BE MOST RELUCTANT TO MAKE ANY PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THIS
MATTER OR TO RISK EMBARRASSING OR OFFENDING THEIR ITALIAN
COLLEAGUES BY RAISING SUBJECT IN BRUSSELS IN EC.

2. PARTY-TO-PARTY CHANNELS MIGHT PROVIDE A MEANS OF APPROACH.
HOWEVER, IT WOULD HAVE TO BE DISCREETLY STIMULATED AND MANAGED
AND THIS WOULD PRESENT PROBLEMS AND MIGHT WELL NOT SUCCEED.

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WE RECALL U.S. EFFORTS HERE IN SIMILAR PERIOD OVER A YEAR AGO TO
ENCOURAGE DUTCH TO WORK THOROUGH SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL
MACHINERY MORE OR LESS MISFIRED SO FAR AS DUTCH
WERE CONCERNED. DUTCH COUNTERPART OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS,
CDA, HAS VERY LIMITED EXPERIENCE WITH ITS FOREIGN COLLEAGUES.
WE ARE SKEPTICAL WHETHER IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES AS NEW
DUTCH GOVERNMENT SETS ITS DOMESTIC COURSE IT WOULD BE

DISPOSED TO DEVOTE ANY TIME OR ENERGY TO EXTERNAL ISSUES.

3. PRESS INTEREST HAS BEEN THOROUGH AND CONTINUING. INITIAL REPORTING AND SUBSEQUENT FOLLOW-ON WAS FACTUAL ACCOUNT OF U.S. STATEMENT, BUTTRESSED BY FAIRLY DETAILED, CONTINUING EXPOSITIONS OF ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION. NUMBER OF PRESS ACCOUNTS CHARACTERIZED U.S. ASSESSMENT OF DANGERS IN ITALY AS CORRECT. EDITORIAL COMMENT WAS OFTEN CRITICAL OF U.S. POSITION. ONE COMMENTATOR SUGGESTED THAT COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN ITALIAN GOVERNMENT WOULD INTRODUCE "TROJAN HORSE" IN NATO ALLIANCE. ANOTHER CRITICAL EDITORIAL ASSERTED THAT THE RAPIDLY APPROACHING ITALIAN GOVERNMENT "CRISIS" HAD BEEN FURTHER COMPLICATED THROUGH THE U.S. STATEMENT WHICH WAS CHARACTERIZED BY "EXTRAORDINARILY CLUMSY TIMING" AND ADDED THAT WASHINGTON'S RESISTANCE TO COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN CONDITIONS NOW PREVAILING IN ITALY INVITED THE SUSPICION THAT U.S. WOULD PREFER A "COLONELS" REGIME" TO A GOVERNMENT INCLUDING EUROCOMMUNISTS. MORE SOBER COMMENT OBSERVED THAT WASHINGTON RECOGNIZED WISELY THAT EUROPEANS COULD MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS BUT BELIEVED U.S. WAS EQUALLY FREE TO DRAW ITS OWN CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING THEIR CONSEQUENCES INTERNATIONALLY. MIDDLE OF THE ROAD OPINION PERHAPS BEST SUMMED UP BY RIGHT OF CENTER "HAAGSE COURANT" EDITORIAL WHICH QUESTIONS REASONS FOR STATEMENT, BUT AGREES WITH U.S. VIEWS OF CRISIS. EDITORIAL RAISES ONE QUESTION HEARD FREQUENTLY HERE, "IN AN ITALY ON THE EDGE OF CIVIL WAR, CAN A PARTY WHICH GAINED MORE THAN A THIRD OF THE VOTES BE
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EXCLUDED?"

4. IN LIGHT OF ALL THIS WE SURMISE THAT WHATEVER THE PRIVATE SYMPATHY FOR U.S. POSITION DUTCH WOULD NOT BE DISPOSED TO TAKE ANY INITIATIVE THEMSELVES WITH ITALIANS. LIKE OTHER EUROPEANS THEY ARE SENSITIVE TO ANY MOVE THAT MIGHT BE INTERPRETED AS INTERVENTION IN THEIR INTERNAL AFFAIRS AND CONSEQUENTLY WOULD VIEW EQUALLY ADVERSELY ANY PROPOSED ACT OF THEIR OWN THAT COULD BE SO INTERPRETED. MOREOVER, LACK OF PUBLIC CONCERN WITH EVENTS SOUTH OF ALPS, HOWEVER UNREALISTIC IN LIGHT OF NATO ALLIANCE CONSIDERATIONS, WOULD BE VIEWED BY DUTCH GOVERNMENT AS ONE MORE REASON TO AVOID DIRECT INVOLVEMENT.
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